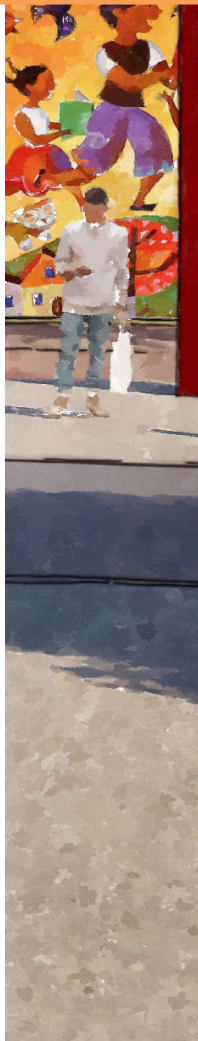


WESTSIDE STRATEGIC AREA STUDY



Las Palmas Area

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

City Council District 5 secured funding in the Fiscal Year 2019 Budget for focused studies of three strategic community hubs on the Westside of San Antonio. The goal of the studies was to enhance community appeal and connectivity, and to identify and implement investments and programs that will help create a unified sense of place in each area. The three community hubs include:

- **The Las Palmas Area;**
- **The Madonna Neighborhood Center and Gardendale Elementary Area; and**
- **The Good Samaritan Center/Cassiano Homes Apartments Area.**

The Las Palmas Area Study focused on the area around Las Palmas Park, the YWCA Olga Madrid Center, and the Las Palmas Branch Library. The concepts and recommendations build upon a foundation of previous public input, investments, and coordination by the Public Library, Metro Health, Parks and Recreation, and the YWCA Olga Madrid Center. Community stakeholders from the Las Palmas Neighborhood Association and the Friends of Las Palmas Library organization were integral to the process, helping to reaffirm previous objectives and suggesting new ones. The process included an evaluation of community and public assets in each area; multiple stakeholder interviews and discussions; and three Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings, all resulting in the identification of needs and opportunities as well as recommendations for facility, park, street, and public space improvements that may be candidates for the 2022 Bond Program. In addition, the study sought to establish a coordinated approach among City departments and

partner organizations and agencies for more coordinated community service provision and use of shared spaces and resources.

The Las Palmas area community members and stakeholders expressed a vision for a more cohesive community hub that is safe and easy to access from all directions. They envision the area as a destination, not just for the adjacent neighborhoods, but for all of the Westside and for visitors from other areas of the city. They described a dynamic space with ongoing activities and programming that reflect the history and culture of the area while also serving the important needs of the surrounding community, including:

- Health and wellness programs;
- Recreation and active mobility opportunities;
- Childcare and other services for young parents and families;
- Indoor and outdoor public meeting spaces; and

- Flexible multi-use spaces that can accommodate a variety of activities and events.

The concepts and recommendations outlined in this report reflect these goals and provide insight into the design intent and objectives of the community. Everyone understood throughout the process that a more detailed public input, design, and engineering process will occur if this project is approved and funded in the 2022 Bond Program.

The next section provides an overview of the design concepts and objectives. Following that are sections with more detailed descriptions and accompanying conceptual illustrations of the various recommended improvement categories. The report concludes with a Project Improvements Table that lists each main recommended improvement, key partners, potential champions, and high-level cost estimates.



Stakeholder Advisory Group Meeting [via Zoom]







Westside Strategic Areas Base Map

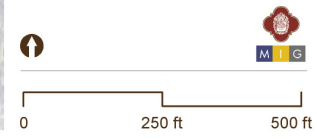
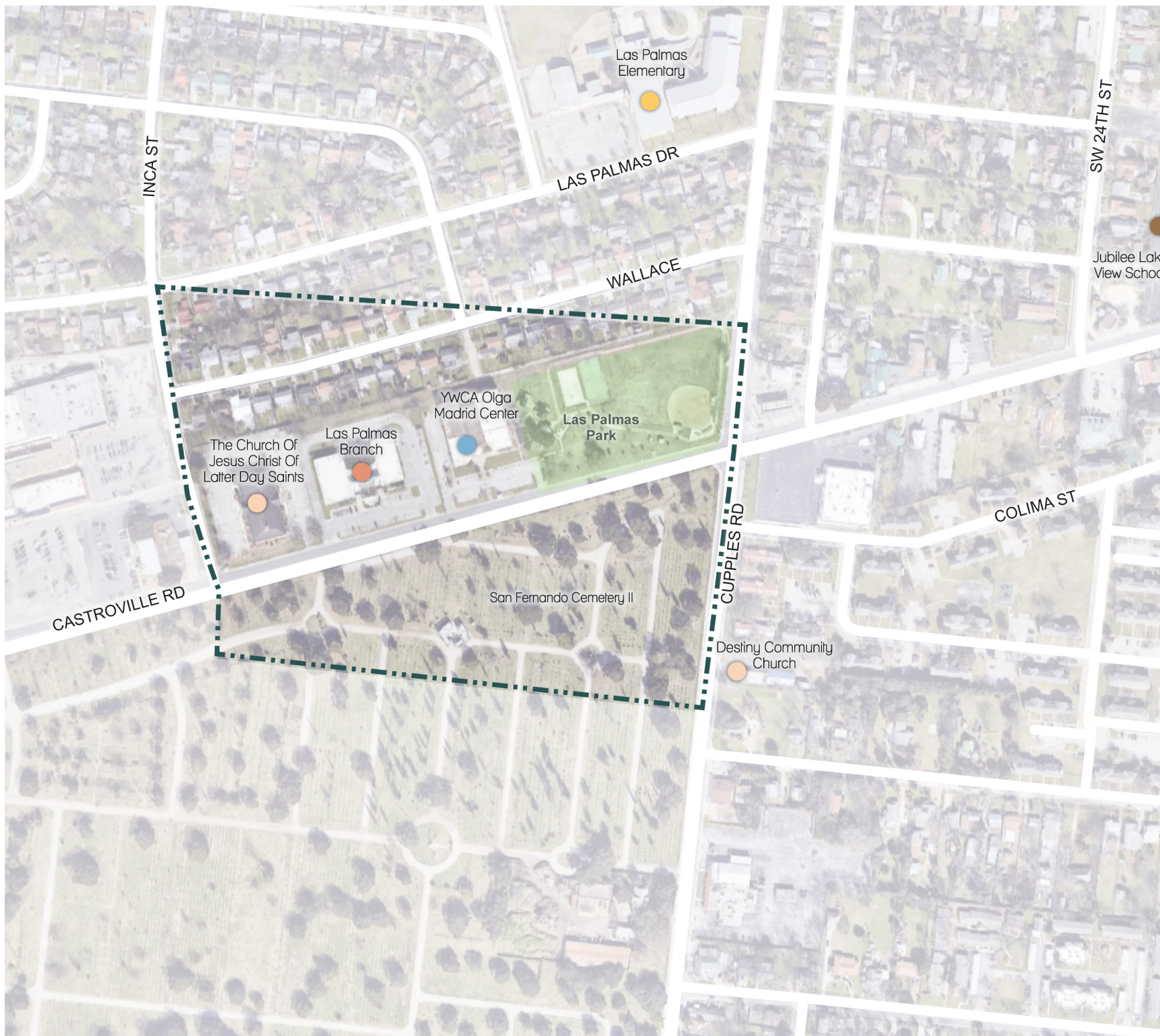
LAS PALMAS AREA

LEGEND

-  Park or Open Space
-  Strategic Area Boundary

Community Amenities

-  Public School
-  Private School
-  Charter School
-  Place of Worship
-  Library
-  Recreation Center



CONCEPT OVERVIEW AND DESIGN INTENT

The Las Palmas conceptual design is intended as a cohesive whole. For the purposes of being considered for the 2022 Bond Program as currently structured, the recommended improvements are grouped to align with typical Bond propositions such as Parks, Streets, and Facilities. Although each category of improvements reflects important community objectives and can stand alone, the design intent and recommendation of the community stakeholders is that a comprehensive and holistic approach is taken to ensure each of these mutually supportive concepts is integrated into the final investment and design. Each category is briefly described below, with more detail and conceptual illustrations provided in the sections that follow.

Pedestrian Safety And Accessibility Improvements

Two key improvements for the Las Palmas area focus on creating better mobility options and access to the public facilities and amenities. Sidewalk, roadway, and crosswalk improvements along Castroville Road include widening the sidewalk; providing more shade trees, vegetation, and lighting; and defined walkways from the sidewalk to the entrances of the Library and the YWCA. Improvements along Castroville Road would include the narrowing (but not elimination) of travel lanes to provide pedestrian refuge islands in new crosswalks aligned with the building entrances, and a new bus slip lane for safer boarding and alighting.

To accommodate the widened sidewalks, the parking lots servicing the Library and the YWCA would be leveled and reconfigured

for more efficient parking and automobile ingress/egress locations.

Park Improvements

Park improvements are a high priority for the community stakeholders. Recommended improvements include more shaded bleachers and seating for viewing the sports/baseball field, converting the current tennis court into a multi-use court and adding a shade structure, refurbishing the basketball court and adding a shade structure, installing a splash pad, and building a larger community garden facility.

Paseo las Palmas

A “Paseo las Palmas” along the northern “back” side of the buildings will link to the existing trail around the park, providing a safe, comfortable, and aesthetically pleasing continuous walking path connecting the park, the YWCA, the new zocalo, and the Library. Shade trees, vegetation, high quality materials, and pedestrian scaled lighting will enhance the safety, comfort, and appeal of the paseo.

Community Plaza And Public Facilities

There are several public space and facilities improvements recommended, some of which are new to this process, and some that build on the improvements from the 2017 Bond Program. The creation of a new plaza or zocalo located between the YWCA and Library buildings is a key aspect of the design that will help connect these two important community institutions and create a vibrant, flexible, multiuse space that anchors the site. Building additions on the northeast corner of the Library building and on the northwest corner of the YWCA building will provide much needed flexible public meeting and activity space. The two building additions would frame

the continuation of the new zocalo and provide a more intimate, shaded community gathering space. Enclosing the front portico of the Library to create additional meeting space and remodeling the interior of the building to better accommodate and align the needs of the Public Library and Metro Health (which utilizes the eastern portion of the building) should also be explored as follow-ups to community goals not achieved with the 2017 Bond Program improvements.

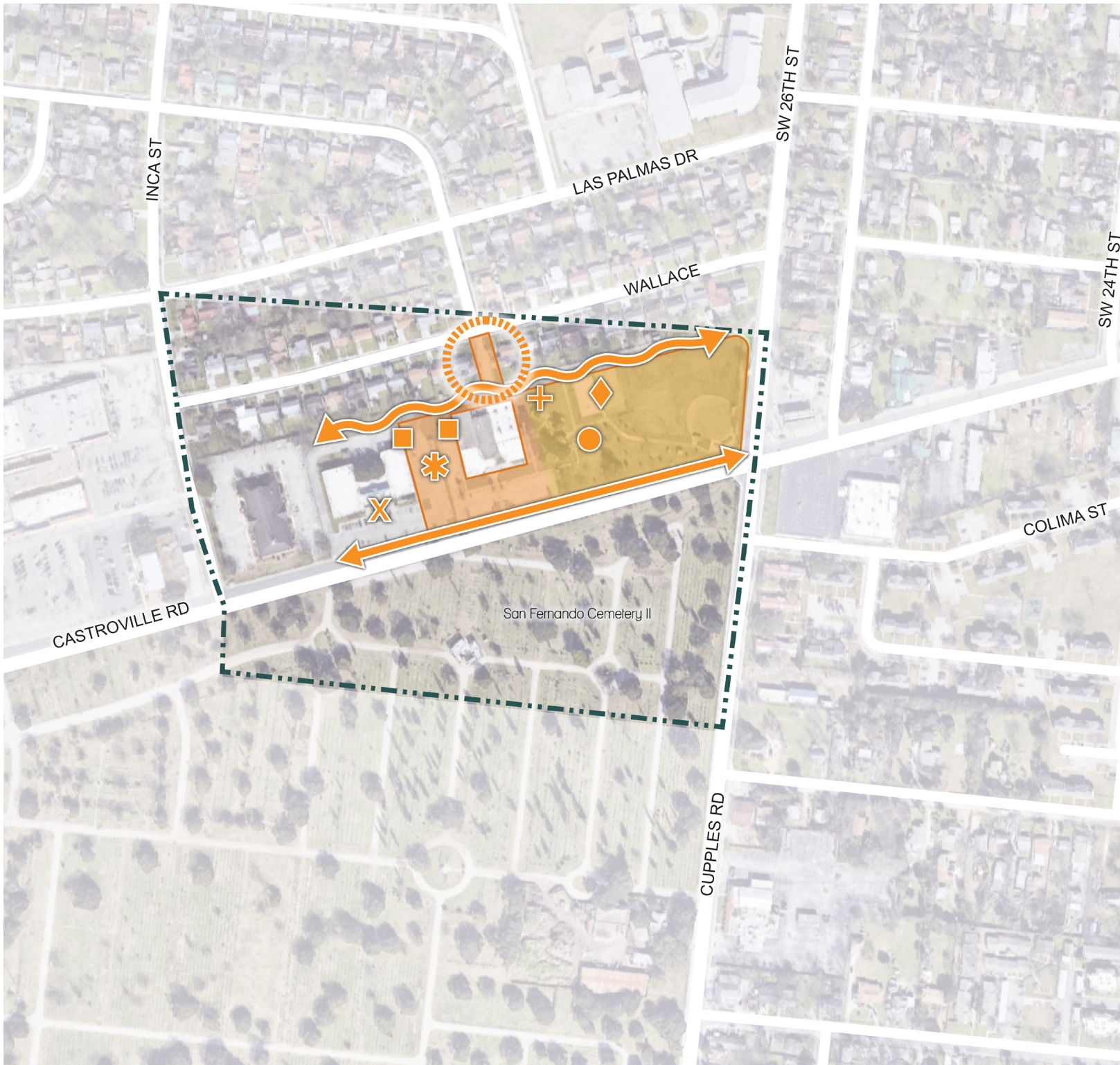
Neighborhood Gateway And Access Improvements

The community also stressed the desire for improved gateway and wayfinding elements, particularly at the two corners of the site along SW 26th Street/Cupples Road and at the rear alleyway from Wallace Street on the north side of the site. Noticeable, distinctive, and well-lit signage (perhaps built into new retaining walls or small monuments) will enhance the entrances to the park along SW 26th Street and create a better sense of identity for the area. The northern entrance from Wallace Street near the back side of the YWCA should include improvements for pedestrian safety, seamlessly link into the “Paseo las Palmas,” and provide public art and wayfinding signage to help create a clearer and more welcoming approach to the Las Palmas community amenities.

Please note: illustrations and example photographs included throughout this document are meant to convey design intent and provide examples of how the recommended concepts and features might look. Future community input, design, and engineering processes should use them as a starting point for guiding their conversations, but final details could certainly vary from exactly what is shown here within.

Westside Strategic Areas

LAS PALMAS AREA



 Strategic Area Boundary

Las Palmas Park & Access Improvements; Paseo Las Palmas

-  - Park Improvements
-  - Paseo Las Palmas connects Park to YWCA and Las Palmas Library
-  - Neighborhood Gateway access to Las Palmas Park
-  - Pedestrian Safety Improvements & Access Along Castroville Road
-  - Splash Pad
-  - Repurposed and Shaded Courts
-  - Community Plaza & Public Seating
-  - Extension of Las Palmas Library Building & YWCA Building
-  - Enclosed Covered Courtyard Entry for Las Palmas Library
-  - Community Garden

Castroville Road - Existing Conditions



8

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The experience of walking along or waiting for a bus along Castroville Road must be improved, especially in front of this critical mass of community amenities. Current conditions with narrow, uneven sidewalks (sometimes impeded by utility poles) and fast-moving traffic on the adjacent road do not provide a safe or comfortable experience for pedestrians or other users.

Excess capacity in the adjacent parking lots will allow the sidewalk on the north side of Castroville Road to be widened significantly, creating a more desirable mobility environment in which pedestrians and other users are farther away from the automobile traffic, multiple people can walk safely side-by-side, and streetscape amenities such as benches and planters can be included to enhance comfort and enjoyment. Ideally, utilities will be undergrounded during construction of the new sidewalks, however if this is not possible, the wider sidewalks envisioned will still allow safe and comfortable passage for all users. Additional shade trees and pedestrian-scaled lighting should be provided along the berm between the sidewalk and the parking lot. (Please note that the shade trees and lighting are not depicted in the illustrations on these pages as they would block the views of the buildings behind).

Area residents do not favor a reduction of travel lanes along Castroville Road but do welcome traffic calming measures to slow automobile speeds and provide safer crossing opportunities for pedestrians, including VIA Metropolitan Transit bus patrons. Narrowing lanes, adding pedestrian refuge islands in the middle of Castroville Road, and creating more visible (perhaps signaled) crosswalks should be explored in detail in future detailed design efforts. Similarly, on the south side of Castroville Road, the opportunity to widen sidewalks as well as create a slip lane for VIA buses should be investigated. Close coordination with VIA will be essential to ensure any new facility is designed to meet prevailing operations and safety best practices.



Castroville Road - Aspirational Illustration

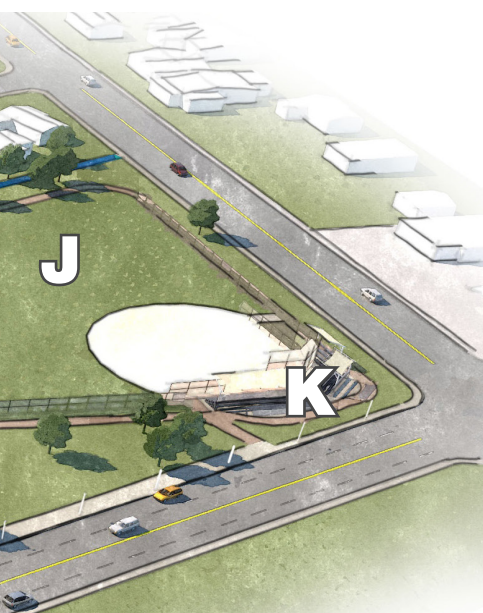


PARK IMPROVEMENTS

The community desires a park with increased functionality and appeal that attracts and provides recreation and activity options for all ages and abilities, but especially for neighborhood children. Adding shaded bleachers or other seating options behind home plate and along the third base line will enhance the experience and comfort of parents and family members as spectators. The shaded bleachers can be designed to also serve as a gateway element into the Las Palmas neighborhood along Castroville. Adding fencing around the entire field should be explored with the community in more detail; the advantage would be establishing regulation standards for hosting official league games; the disadvantage would be potentially limiting the more flexible use of the field for multiple sports.

A splash pad with shaded seating area, a shaded basketball court, and a shaded repurposed multi-sport court will all provide additional options for enjoyment of the park in all weather and all seasons. An expanded and improved community garden will be an asset to the community and can be jointly maintained and utilized by nutrition and healthy eating programs at both the YWCA and the Metropolitan Health District. Shaded seating, lighting, water hook-ups, a tool shed, and worktables would all improve utility and comfort for those who work in and visit the garden.

When the parking lots on the site are leveled and reconfigured, 8-10 additional spaces should be created on the eastern end of the lot that will provide easier and more direct access to the park amenities



F- Neighborhood Gateway

G- Community Garden

H- Covered Sport Court

I- Splash Pad

J- Improved Baseball Field

K- Shaded Seating and Spectator Areas



Covered Basketball Courts

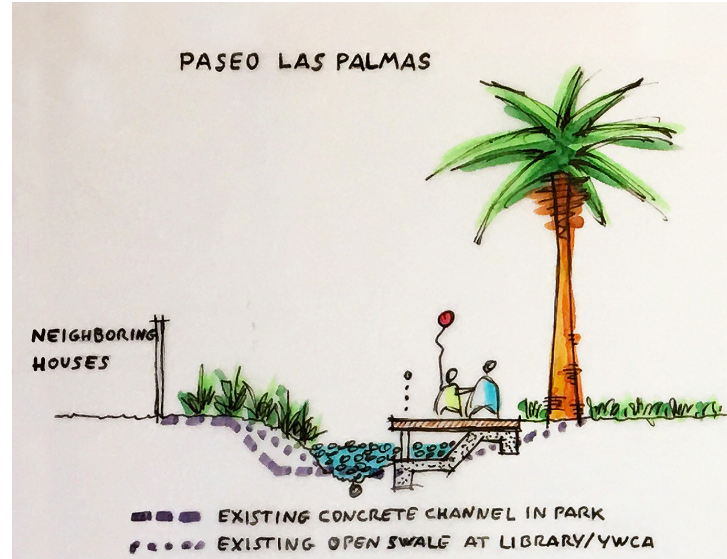


Splash Pad Feature

Palm Tree Lined Paseo



Conceptual Cross-Section Sketch



Credit: Daniel Leal, Urban Designer, Parks and Recreation

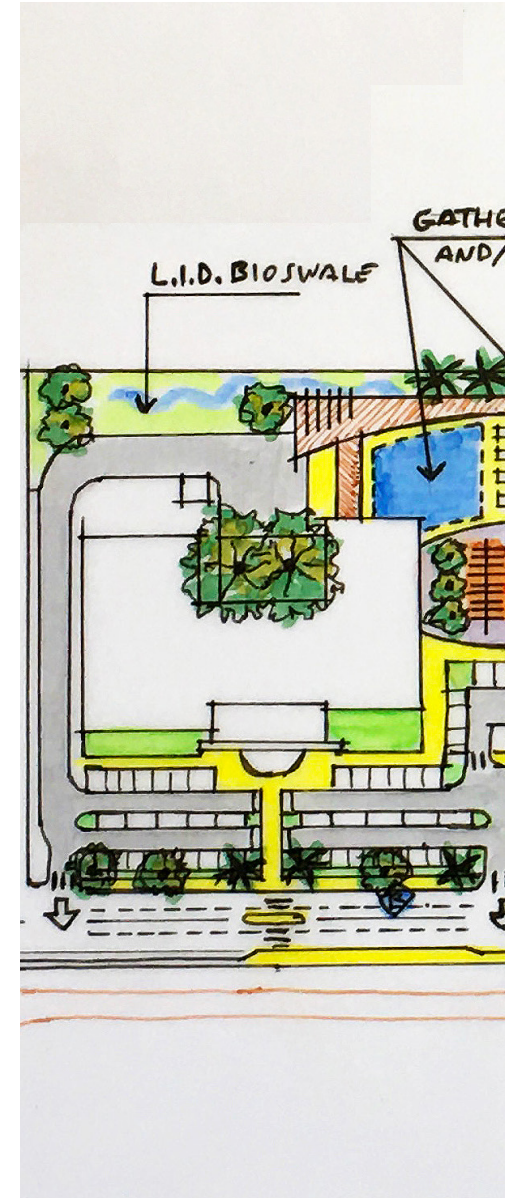
PASEO DE LAS PALMAS

The community's goals for increased walking opportunities and better activation of the whole site, along with the desire to recognize the history and signature natural element of the area, coalesced into the concept for "Paseo las Palmas." The paseo will beautify and activate the northern edge of the Las Palmas site, which is currently vacant, unattractive, and mostly unused. This new walking path will continue from the compacted gravel walking trail around the park and extend west past the public alley entrance from Wallace Street, the YWCA building, and the new zocalo, before terminating at the beautiful heritage oak in the courtyard area behind the Library. The Paseo will provide safe and comfortable walking opportunities far from the traffic of Castroville Road, link all the important amenities of the Las Palmas complex, and help improve the experience and wayfinding of visitors arriving from the north.

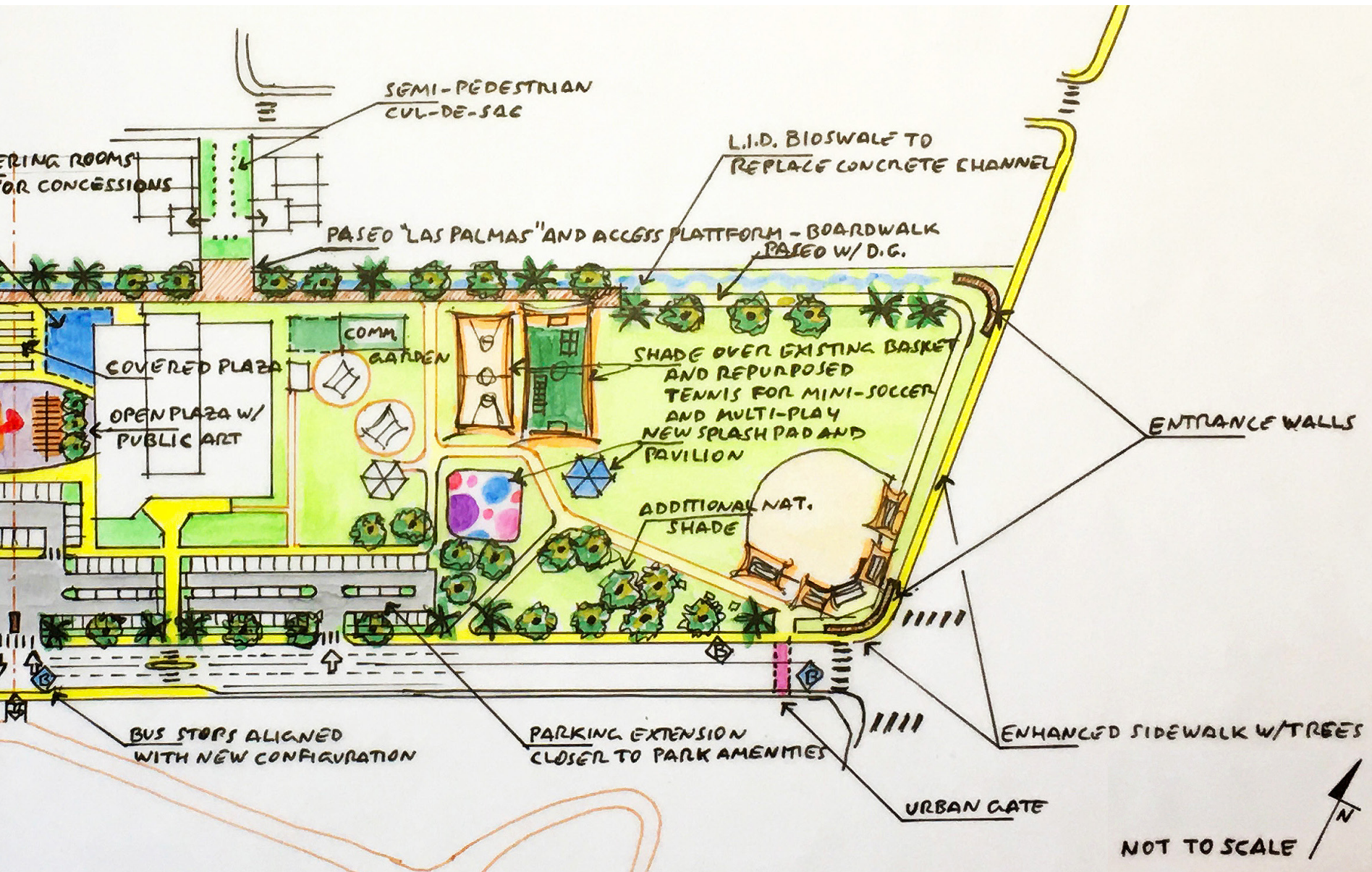
Where needed, the paseo will be an elevated wooden pathway keeping pedestrians above the existing drainage areas on-site. Natural vegetation, shade trees, and green infrastructure should be used in the final design of the paseo. Lighting and other design elements should be sensitive to and create a buffer from the neighboring houses.

Where the paseo connects to the back of the Library at the heritage oak, additional design considerations and costs may include relocation of several staff parking spaces, delivery access, and location of and access to utilities.

Draft sketch - does not reflect all details of final design.



Credit: Daniel Leal, Urban Designer, Parks and Recreation



Paseo de Las Palmas - Concept Plan View Sketch

Las Palmas Plaza Aerial View



COMMUNITY PLAZA AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

The proposed zocalo between the YWCA and Library/Metro Health buildings helps anchor the entire site and solves several design challenges. The berm and elevation difference between the YWCA and Library parking lots currently limits access for many pedestrians and those with disabilities. In conjunction with leveling and reconfiguring the parking lots, creating the level plaza between the two buildings will ensure easy access across the site for everyone and provide ADA-accessible entrance opportunities on the west side of the YWCA building.

The zocalo should be designed with flexibility and the ability to host many different events in mind; food trucks, farmers markets, health fairs, educational classes, live music, and movie nights are just some examples. High quality, beautiful, durable materials should be prioritized and infrastructure such as electrical outlets, water sources, and drainage should be carefully designed to ensure a variety of users can easily utilize the site in different configurations. Public art, shade structures and trees, planters and vegetation, and complementary lighting should also be incorporated to enhance the beauty and functionality of the zocalo. Flexible and movable seating and table options should be provided so users can use the space optimally under different circumstances.



The new building additions proposed for the northern end of the plaza will help define the space and seamlessly connect the Library/Metro Health and YWCA buildings to this vibrant, central activity area as well as to the Paseo las Palmas. Shade structures (such as the sails depicted) will provide essential relief from sun and rain and should complement other design elements on site. Like the plaza, the building additions should be designed to provide maximum flexibility for hosting a variety of events, classes, and meetings. While the buildings should be built as conditioned spaces comfortable in any conditions, window walls and accordion-style or roll-up glass doors will create a sense of openness and safety and will allow the buildings to be used as indoor-outdoor spaces as weather conditions dictate. Internal partition, lighting, and technology/projection options should be designed and incorporated to facilitate a wide variety of meeting and event types.

Depending upon priorities and resources identified by the Library and Metro Health (which utilizes the eastern portion of the building) staff in the future, enclosing the front portico of the Library (as shown in renderings on pages 7 & 8 of this document) to create additional meeting space, as well as the building addition connected to the Library/Metro Health building should be coordinated with additional internal renovations and space reconfigurations that will better suit the mission and operational needs of the Library and Metro Health programs and their ability to define and share entrances and spaces accordingly. These should also be explored as follow-ups to community goals not achieved with the 2017 Bond Program improvements. These potential changes were not discussed in detail as part of this process and would need to be explored in detail in the future.

NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAY ACCESS

The investments and collaboration described above will help make Las Palmas a city-wide destination. The variety of park, street, facility, and public space improvements envisioned to create this cohesive community hub should be complemented by appealing gateways, signage, and wayfinding tools that welcome daily users and occasional visitors alike, and that signal their arrival at this special and valued place. Pairs of palm trees should be planted at each significant entrance to indicate entry and exit opportunities in a way that celebrates the history and legacy of the area. Similarly, consistently styled, well-lit, and beautiful signs should be incorporated into retaining walls, fencing or small monumentation clearly identifying the Las Palmas area and the important destinations and amenities it comprises. This type of signage is most important at the north alley entrance from Wallace Street, at the eastern corners of the park along SW 26th Street, and along Castroville Road in front of the YWCA and Library buildings.

The north entrance to the site through the alley from Wallace Street presents a special opportunity to upgrade and enhance peoples' arrival experience. This is the main connection point for many who live in the Las Palmas neighborhood, and for children that travel to the site from the nearby Las Palmas Elementary School. Improving the alleyway as a defined public space with protected sidewalks should encourage walking and biking to the area. Incorporating a large public art mural on the back of the YWCA building will create a sense of place and should be commissioned to reflect the history and culture of the area as well as the myriad uses and activities provided on-site.



Mural Artwork



Pedestrian Alley



Neighborhood Gateway Access to Las Palmas Park



CONCLUSION

The Las Palmas area has a rich history and many memories for longtime Westside residents. It is an area that deserves a vibrant community gathering space that serves the needs of all ages, abilities, and interests and that brings neighbors together for both everyday activities as well as special events. Las Palmas Park, the Public Library, and the Metro Health offices serve important public roles in the health, wellness, education, and community camaraderie of area residents. The YWCA has been serving San Antonio for 111 years and specifically at the Westside's Olga Madrid Center for 44 years. It embraces that history and legacy, and yet constantly strives to adapt to both perpetual as well as new needs it perceives in the community, tackling persistent challenges for young women and mothers, providing much needed childcare and early education, empowering youth and teens, and addressing racial justice and gender equity.

Despite the unquestionable importance of the public and community institutions at Las Palmas, if this project is approved for and built through Bond funding, its special appeal will go well beyond just being a collection of useful, inspiring, and sometimes life-changing services and amenities. A unique sense of place, welcoming entrances, ease of access throughout the site, and safe, comfortable, and beautiful public spaces will all combine to create a holistic place much greater than the sum of its parts. As one community stakeholder stated at the end of the process, "Great design belongs to everyone, not just those who can pay the most for it."

The community's careful collective design of the site also acknowledges and reflects the surrounding area, respecting the grace and cultural significance of the historic San Fernando II cemetery just across Castroville Road, prioritizing safe access for nearby neighbors and area elementary school children, and recognizing the importance of connecting to the vibrant, historic shopping area several blocks to the west.

One additional overarching design objective worth mentioning that was not specific to any one of the categories described above is stakeholder concern about crime and safety. Some crime and vandalism are a reality in this part of the Westside of San Antonio. While it did not emerge as a primary driver of design concepts, stakeholders acknowledged its importance and supported the idea of requesting a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessment of proposed improvements to help ensure that active and passive crime prevention and safety aspects are incorporated into the final designs.

Almost everyone who participated in this process or who reviewed the concepts commented that "it is so doable!" Collectively, all the improvements described in this report undoubtedly represent a significant investment, but it is one which is certainly on par with many other investments made in past Bond Programs, and it is in an area that has not typically seen investment commensurate with other parts of the City in recent years. In addition, while many other Bond projects are stand-alone, one-off projects, this

Las Palmas project (as well as the other Westside studies) demonstrates the value of bringing together passionate, committed stakeholders and design professionals to create a cohesive vision for an area that truly reflects the needs of area residents and offers design solutions and investments that achieve multiple, overlapping objectives.

The community stakeholders recognize that not every investment suggested in this concept design will be eligible for bond funding. However, it was important to include all the priorities, both big and small to faithfully express the depth and detail of their collective vision. It is hoped that additional funding sources, partnerships, and creative collaborations can be identified to fill the gaps and implement items that fall outside the strict parameters of the Bond Program funding mechanism.

The Project Improvement Table on the next page provides a simple summary of the major investments likely to be eligible for the Bond Program. It also includes key partners for collaboration, potential champions for both the Bond Program process itself as well as future community input and design processes, and high-level, planning cost estimates, which do not include soft costs. For inclusion into the formal Bond Program process, each item will need more detailed review and assessment by Public Works staff and/or their consultant team to derive more precise cost figures.

PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS TABLE

IMPROVEMENT	ORDER OF MAGNITUDE COST ESTIMATE	KEY PARTNERS	POTENTIAL CHAMPIONS
PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS			
CASTROVILLE RD WIDENED SIDEWALK (12' WIDE WITH RELOCATED RETAINING WALL; INCLUDES 5% OF TOTAL HARDSCAPE COSTS FOR BENCHES, SIGNAGE, ETC.)	~\$800,000	Public Works, YWCA, Las Palmas Library, VIA	Las Palmas Neighborhood Association, WNAC, Friends of the San Antonio Library, San Fernando Cemetery
PEDESTRIAN REFUGE ISLANDS (2)	~\$150,000	Public Works, VIA	
PARK IMPROVEMENTS			
SPLASH PAD	~\$750,000	Parks and Recreation, YWCA, Metro Health	Las Palmas Neighborhood Association, WNAC, Westside Chamber of Commerce, HEB
REPURPOSED AND SHADED COURTS	~\$350,000		
PARK ENHANCEMENTS (OTHER THAN SPLASH PAD AND SHADED COURTS)	~\$1,100,000		
PASEO DE LAS PALMAS			
PASEO (BOARDWALK, TREES, LIGHTING, NATURALIZED CULVERT, BOLLARDS, ETC.)	~\$1,000,000	Parks and Recreation, Public Works, YWCA, Las Palmas Library, Metro Health	Friends of the San Antonio Library, Merchants of Las Palmas, UTSA Health
COMMUNITY PLAZA AND PUBLIC FACILITIES			
ZOCALO AND PUBLIC SEATING (PAVING, SHADE SAIL, TREES, ETC.)	~\$900,000	Las Palmas Library, YWCA, Metro Health	Las Palmas Neighborhood Association, WNAC, Friends of the San Antonio Library, Merchants of Las Palmas, WellMed, Amerigroup, UTSA Health
LAS PALMAS LIBRARY IMPROVEMENTS (LEVERAGE FUNDING FOR ENCLOSED COURTYARD, BUILDING ADDITION)	~\$1,500,000	Las Palmas Library, Metro Health	
YWCA IMPROVEMENTS (LEVERAGE FUNDING FOR RENOVATIONS, BUILDING ADDITION)	~\$1,500,000	YWCA	
NEIGHBORHOOD GATEWAY ACCESS			
GATEWAY FEATURES (CURB RAMPS, STRIPING, MONUMENT SIGN, BOLLARDS, PUBLIC ART, ETC.)	~\$150,000	Public Works, YWCA	Las Palmas Neighborhood Association, WNAC



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
PLANNING DEPARTMENT

